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AUTHOR Riske, Milton
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ABSTRACT

Information from 22 oral history interviews, periodicals, unpublished manuscripts, and school records provides an indication of the role played by country schools in the history of southeastern Wyoming and forms part of an 8-state research effort to locate and preserve information related to country schools. The report focuses on six aspects of the country school experience: schools as historical sites, schools as community centers, teachers (their roles, rules and regulations), curriculum (reading, writing, arithmetic, and recitation), the school's role in the Americanization of ethnic groups, and the country school today. Two examples illustrate the continuing challenges of rural education in southern Wyoming. From the Laramie county superintendent in 1883: "Found School ... held in a tent with board placed on nail keg for seat. The teacher is supplied with a good table, globe, dictionary and fractural supplies. Mr. J.W. McClure is a faithful teacher though working under difficulties." In 1981 the State Department of Education believes several techniques must be "considered for continuing and strengthening rural education. These include ... increasing community involvement in rural schools; developing strong pre-service and in-service programs; conducting research on the stress of rural teaching and how to stem the high rate of turnover." (NEC)

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY:

Humanities on the Frontier

SOUTHEASTERN WYOMING'S COUNTRY SCHOOLS

Milton Riske

Retired Teacher
Cheyenne, Wyoming

1981

Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities

Sponsored by the Mountain Plains Library Association

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY: HUMANITIES ON THE FRONTIER

The Mountain Plains Library Association is pleased to be involved in this project documenting the country school experience. Funding of this project from the National Endowment for the Humanities, cost sharing and other contributions enabled us all to work with the several state-based Humanities Committees as well as many other state and local libraries, agencies and interested citizens. We are deeply impressed not only by the enthusiasm for this work by all concerned but by the wealth of experience brought to bear in focusing attention on—and recapturing—this important part of history, and how we got here. This project seems to identify many of the roots and "character formation" of our social, political and economic institutions in the West.

Already the main Project objective seems to be met, stimulating library usage and increasing circulation of historical and humanities materials in this region. Public interest is rising in regional, state and local history. Oral history programs are increasing with greater public participation. The study of genealogy—and the search for this information—is causing much interest in consulting—and preserving—historical materials. What has been started here will not end with this project. The immediate results will tour the entire region and be available for any who wish the program, film, and exhibit. There will be more discussion of—and action on—the issues involving the humanities and public policies past and present. The Mountain Plains Library Association is proud to be a partner in this work, the Country School Legacy, and its contribution to understanding humanities on the frontier.

Joseph J. Anderson
Nevada State Librarian
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COUNTRY SCHOOLS AS HISTORICAL SITES

by

Milt Riske

John Greenleaf Whittier described a schoolhouse by the road as "a ragged beggar sunning."

Velma Linford, a Wyoming state superintendent of schools, warned the people of the state not to "build monuments with taxpayer's money."

In southern Wyoming there are but a few "ragged beggars" still in existence, and none are monuments, but functional edifices dedicated to educating rural and hamlet children.

According to the State Department of Education in Wyoming there are 25 districts with at least one rural school. There are 82 rural elementary schools with 139 teachers serving 1,296 pupils. Some schools have but one or two pupils per teacher.

Fifty years ago there were over 1,000 rural schools employing 1,200 teachers for an enrollment of 15,000 pupils.[1]

Schools followed the people who settled the territory, the mountain man, the military, the railroader, the ranchers, the homesteaders, the miners and later, the oil drillers.

The first school in Wyoming was established in 1852 at Fort Laramie, three years after the fort had been sold to the government for a base of operations against the Indians. Previously it had functioned as a base for fur trading.

Military Chaplain Richard Vaux started the school in a building which later was to be used as a laundry. Chaplain Vaux, assisted by his older daughter Victoria, taught the school which was open to officers' children as well as trader's offspring.

A school built in 1866 in Fort Bridger is still standing. However, prior to this edifice, Judge W.A. Carter taught school in a room in his home at the fort. In a letter published in the Wyoming Annals, a son of Carters writes:

> "It (the school) was kept in the beginning in one of the rooms in our house and the teacher was Miss Fannie Foote employed in St. Louis, Missouri and brought out by my father." [2]

In a letter to the editor published in the Cheyenne Leader, October 19, 1867, a reader expressed concern about a school in Cheyenne:

> "What are we going to do about a school this winter? I know there are many things requiring the attention of the enterprising citizens of Cheyenne and I know there are many public expenses to be borne. But it is not indispensable that we should have a school. I see the children in every alley and street, and no doubt there are more coming." [3]

The writer continued that he was neither a parent, guardian or a teacher. He believed that it was likely a school could be built by public subscription. And it was constructed by subscription, the citizens having raised about $25,000. On January 6, 1869, the new building was dedicated with the thermometer reading a frigid 25° below zero.

Mrs. Elizabeth Snow Hawes, an early teacher, described the first school in the frontier town of Cheyenne:

> "The first schoolhouse was a loosely built wooden shack with two rooms seating perhaps 50 pupils each. Through the roof the winter blizzards showered a fine mist of snow upon us." [4]

Mrs. Hawes later became county superintendent of schools.

Settlement of the Territory followed the Union Pacific tracks and the second public school was founded in Laramie. The arrival of teacher Eliza Stewart in 1868 marked the foundation of a school in Laramie. The building was erected, but had no roof. A benefit dance was held to raise funds for the completion of the structure.

In 1870 the Laramie Sentinel reports on the schools on the outer fringes. They were at Red Buttes, Hutton Grove and the Fish Hatchery which was near Fort Sanders. Several years later the Red Buttes school burned down and $100 was appropriated for a new one.[5]

One year after the railroad shops were constructed, Rawlins established their school in 1869. Money again was raised by subscription. Although a law was passed by the Territorial Legislature which maintained that schools should be provided for by general taxation rather than voluntary contributions, there are reports of a number of occasions which ranchers and farmers paid for schools and teachers out of their own pockets. Mr. Cronberg, to educate his three sons, built a school and paid for the teacher for the first two years until the district took over the duties.[6]

During the depression J. Stuart Brown recalls that he and his brothers took dollars to school to help pay the teachers salary and complete the school term.[7]

The first school in Rawlins was held in a log building which was later converted into a lodging house known as "The Beehive." Its first teacher came from Council Bluffs, Iowa, and she taught five students. As the school population grew the school was moved to larger quarters nine times in 16 years; once, into a log building which had formerly been a saloon. Occupation as an educational facility was short lived when, because it was the best constructed building in town, it became the court house and a fortification against Indian raids.[8]

By 1870 a school was held in South Pass City with a James Stilman as the first teacher.

An early school in Evanston was held above a saloon with the wooden stairs leading up the outside of the building to it. The room was furnished with only a blackboard, a table and a few chairs. Miss Oona Hopkins served as first teacher.

Compulsory attendance laws were instituted in the Territory in 1873 also requiring that school would be free to all children ages seven to twenty-one. This date then is the official beginning of rural schools in Wyoming.

The early schools were held in ranch homes, bunkhouses, cook shacks, section houses along the railroad tracks, outbuildings, and even one report of a school held in a sheep wagon.

An early school was reportedly held in Jim Baker's cabin on the Little Snake river in Carbon county in 1875. Mrs. Theo James was the teacher and Jim Baker received the magnificant sum of $2.00 a week rental. As a mountain man, he had moved to the Valley in 1873, finding that Colorado was becoming too civilized and "to get more elbow room." Baker had trapped, prospected, run a store, operated a ferry boat and started a ranch. He had married his second Indian wife and had several children from both.

The log house was fort-like and the teaching took place in the south room. The original building had three stories. It still stands on a plot of ground in Savery which includes two other schools; one now used as a museum. The fort-like cabin is actually on its third site. It had been moved to Cheyenne's Frontier Park as an historical attraction in 1917; but was returned to Savery in 1976. (The original site was nearby across the road from the Baker family graves on a hill.) This land was the site of a school built in 1908 and destroyed by fire in 1926. The building which houses the present museum was then constructed with additions attached until Savery was consolidated with the Baggs district around 1943. The small school was moved to the site in 1934 and is presently used for storage, but there are plans to restore it as a typical one room school.[9]

According to a thesis written by Donald Weir Baxtor, a school known as Burnt Fork was established in the McKinnon area of Sweetwater county in 1877, about seven years after the first settlers. It was a building 16 By 18 feet with a plank floor and dirt roof, and had about nine pupils. Early teachers were Mark Manly, Robert Hereford and William Pearson.

This school was maintained until 1883 when the second and third Burnt Fork school sites were moved closer to the center of population, and glass windows were installed. Area ranchers built it and it endured until 1894 with as many as 27 students at one time.

The fourth Burnt Fork site was a rather large, two-story log building, originally constructed for an Episcopal church and amusement center. It was approximately 60 by 30 feet with a shingle roof. The teacher was Mr. McMillan, known for his strict disciplinarian tactics.

The next Burnt Fork school was on the Vincent ranch in 1895 with Mr. Mc Millan continuing as teacher for $50.00 per month.

The sixth school was situated about a quarter mile east - a log structure 35 by 45 feet, and was utilized until 1924 when it burned to the ground.

Some of the teachers during these years included Molly Listrum, Normoral Ashton, Grace Hathaway, Amazbee Davidson, May Graham, Lucille Hanks, Etta Katzrafe, Jesse Mier, Delish Decker, Mr. McCarney and Pat Murphy.

This building was also used as a community center, and after it was destroyed by fire, a race track was built on the site.[10]

Still another, the seventh Burnt Fork school was of frame construction with a shingle roof, 40 by 60 feet, and heated with a coal stove. The school operated until 1946 when it was closed due to declining enrollment. The few students and teachers were transferred to McKinnon school. The building was torn down around 1974 and a cabin for a summer home built on the site.[11]

A diary kept by Caroline Phelps tells the following about the earliest rural school in Laramie county:

> "On May 5, 1879, a school meeting was held in the Goff section house at Egbert and School District Number three was organized, extending from Pine Bluffs to Archer, 35 miles east and west and 200 miles north and south across the State. J.R. Gordon

> was elected president of the board; Alonzo Martin (Mrs. Gilland's father), Charles Rugg and William Rowland, directors; and Reuben Martin and John Rowland, trustees. Mr. Goff became so irate over the determination of the majority to locate the first school house on the 'Muddy' rather than at Egbert that the meeting was forced to adjourn to the yard." [12]

The school was built 2½ miles south of Egbert on Muddy Creek, actually on the Rugg ranch, later to become the Anthony Wilkinson ranch. A three month term for school was agreed and Miss Mary Wheeler was hired as a teacher.

James Dolan was a charter pupil in the school, and much later he was to purchase this first school building and move it to his father's ranch as a bunkhouse for cowhands.

In 1887 a school was built in Pine Bluffs, but only after a stormy session at the school on Muddy Creek. Many felt there was no need for another school. The first Pine Bluffs school was taught by Minnie Garland. One of the other early teachers was Edna Roberts who was to marry James Dolan.

Rosella Carson, former county superintendent, mentioned in a taped interview that Edna Roberts was one of her teachers. Carson first attended a school at Salem in 1888. Salem was later named Lindbergh for the famed aviator.

While many school board meetings were passive affairs, those in eastern Laramie county sometimes erupted in violent anger.

"Probably because there were Irish," according to Tom Brannigan, an early student. "To prove the sud sod should not be entirely forgotten, they hired Molly Delehanty as a teacher."[13]

There were schools along the Medicine Bow river as early as 1880, as well as along the Sweetwater river. A notation taken from a letter or diary in 1880 stated, "to to the crossing to a dance at the school house" was in reference to a school in the area of Medicine Bow crossing.[14]

Mrs. Ruth Beebe, both in print and on tape, claims there were schools in the valley at Ferris mountain (Carbon county) at this time.

> "When there were fifteen children at school age, Mr. Roberts went to the mountain to get logs with which a school was built. Tom Sun of the famous Sun ranch attended." 15

Another famous pioneer cattleman who attended the rural schools of southern Wyoming was Russell Thorp. He was one of the four students taught by Mrs. Henry Real at a school built in 1884 north of Fort Laramie, then in Laramie county. The site was near where Muskrat creek crossed the old Cheyenne-Black Hills road on the Henry L. Read ranch.

Nine months of school were held, but to accomplish this the school was moved from the Read ranch to the Thorp ranch to the Hargrove ranch. The students boarded free for the three months at the ranch where the school was located. The room had a dirt floor, but the teachers and students put down gunny sacks for rugs, staking the sacks at each corner.

In the early 1900's this same plan was used in Carbon county with a school known as the "traveling school." Participating were youngsters from the Cowdin ranch, the Cordwell ranch and the Q ranch.[16]

By 1886 school was being held at the Fenner ranch at Hams Fork in Uinta county. In 1898 Miss Maggie Cunningham arrived from Evanston to teach, according to a report in the newspaper.

A north end school was built in Evanston by Isaac Ferguson in 1897; later it was transformed into a branch of the L.D.S. church and used as a social hall. Fifteen children attended under Miss Agnes Brehmer of Laramie.

A bed bug infestation caused the school to be vacated, the building sold, and a new school built in 1906. For over twenty-five years this structure built by Samuel B. Adams was used for a school, but it, too, was closed due to bed bugs. It seems the insects were carried in by swallows. "They were so bad that teachers attempting to sleep in the buildings placed the legs of the beds in cans of kerosene."[17]

In the 1890's there was a school at Independence Rock and also at Whiskey Gap.

In 1892, financed with Chicago money, a new town near Soda Lakes was developed. It was called Johnstown in Sweetwater county. There was a newspaper, the"Wyoming Sentinel" and a new brick school. The town was renamed later to Berthaton in honor of Bertha Barnes whom none of the town residents knew.

With failing finances the syndicate leader went East to promote more money. A.H. Barnes, publisher of school books in the district, said he would contribute if the name of Johnstown were changed in honor of his daughter Bertha.

The Homestead Act attracted great numbers of settlers to southern Wyoming. A revision of this law, the Mondell Act, in the early 1900's increased the amount of land the homesteader could "firm up" on, and resulted in more newcomers from the East who believed in the adage "A new place is a new start."

As the settlers moved into hastily thrown together homes with their families, they needed schools. The Wyoming Education Law which promised free education for those between 7 to 21 laid the foundation, and school districts were formed.

Some of the homesteaders may not have been as concerned about education for their offspring as they were thankful for the opportunity to take in some extra money by boarding the teacher. The ready cash helped over some tough times,

Most of the early school buildings were not much more than shacks. Some were simply a room in the homesteader's cabin or a sod hut. Straw mattresses to sleep on and a heating stove for cooking were provided. In the beginning school was usually in session only three to four months. Water was brought from home or, if lucky, there would be a spring or stream nearby. Then water was lugged to the school in the community water bucket with the dipper set on the floor or bench.

When no longer needed as schools, many of these structures were torn down and the lumber used by the farmer or rancher for outbuildings on the premises. A few were converted into dwellings. The Komo Ridge school was moved to Rock River to become a parsonage for the Episcopal church; Woods Landing's school was converted to a post office; two schools in the Calico Hill area of Laramie county were moved together for a community center; Tie Siding's school in Albany county became a store.

When the student population in one area no longer deemed a building a necessity, the school was simply placed in an area which had students. The school itself was moved on logs and with teams of horses rolled to another location. Later on skids were employed, and today the schoolhouses are hoisted onto a flatbed truck and transported.

When a rancher in Albany county would not allow the neighboring rancher access on his land to get the children to school, the rancher sneaked in during the middle of the night and moved the school to his land.[18]

Other moves were caused when a teacher resigned and the only replacement available was the rancher's wife, usually a former teacher. Her going back to teaching was complicated by her own children which she could not leave. (There were no baby sitters nor day care centers then) To allow her to teach, the desks, books and other school equipment were moved into her ranch home and classes were held there.

The transiency of school buildings and the variety of names attached to country schools make accurate research difficult in tracing backgrounds of former schools as well as some still standing. The Pumpkin Vine school in Albany county was also called the Two Way school as the children came from both the Prosser ranch and the Chet Williams XX ranch. When only Dean Prosser attended, it was known as the Prosser school; when only the Williams children attended, it was called the Williams school.

In tracing the history of the Haycreek school which is still standing in Albany county it was discovered on the Hanks ranch. It serves two students, son and daughter of the ranch foreman. When the boy is promoted from the eighth grade, the foreman and his family will transfer to another ranch and the school will be hauled away. According to the foreman's wife, this school was known as the Cowboy school before it was moved to Haycreek; no one seems to know why.

Albany county has the largest number of rural schools in Wyoming in what is today the largest school district area in the United States, larger than the state of Rhode Island. Currently six schools are scattered through the county's hills and valleys, compared to the numbers previously maintained in this rural area, an infinitesimal few. Some of the buildings have been replaced by mobile trailers, and those which do fit the project's definition of a rural school have been moved so often and renamed so that tracing historical sites has become a confused situation.

Cottonwood school, for example, was scattered throughout an area of seven or eight miles back of Laramie Peak, and several were named "Cottonwood." The original Cottonwood Park was built just prior to 1900 and seems to have been established principally for the Parker family. It probably was a "summer school" as winter snows were heavy. In 1919 the original school was rebuilt just below the original site. It was of log construction on a stone foundation - a large, airy room which accomodated twenty children. The gaps between the logs were mortared; the shingled, gabled roof cost $300, an enormous sum for any building at that time. Sam Parker, who was instrumental in establishing the school, lived five miles away, so he built a house adjacent to the school building so his children would be nearby.

This house and school were moved by Parker to his homestead in 1931. After tearing down the buildings, a smaller school was rebuilt and the extra material

used for a house. Here the Cottonwood school was referred to as the Parker school. The building was moved again in 1937 and the name changed to Cottonwood Locke school for the Locke children who attended. This structure caught fire in 1941 and the students carried water from a nearby spring for the teacher to pour on the chimney and under the slats of the roof.

A student who attended the original building described it after it was moved from the Parker site: "It still stands much altered in size from the original. It droops in the late winter, slowly returning to earth and to the past." 19

Cottonwood-Northfork was another school sometimes referred to as Hanks school because it was the building principally attended by the Hanks children. It was situated across Cottonwood creek, and as the teacher boarded at the Hanks ranch, she had to wade across the creek, a hazardous undertaking after the spring thaw. Later a bridge was built.

At a time when no teachers from outside were available, Mrs. Ruth Hanks marched with her offspring off to the school to do the teaching. She placed her baby daughter in the school woodbox for her daytime naps.

The Cottonwood school remaining in the same site became known as School House Hill and was also called Alloway or Lindsey or Hubbard at one time or another for the children attending. This school was in a most picturesque setting of tall pines in an area abounding with wild life of all kinds.

There was also a school named Cottonwood on the south fork of the river. It was 15 by 15 feet and so crowded that the teacher posted the art work on the ceiling. It operated from 1941 to 1945 and was moved to the Parker ranch the following year. Bad water due to barnyard sewage forced the removal of the school to the Starr-Rutherford place. At this site bad water was replaced by good, if not very plentiful, water. A well was dug to remedy the shortage.

Today, the Cottonwood school plus a trailer for the Albany Peak school and another mobile home serving as a teacherage is on the land which was once the site of the Starr-Rutherford log ranch house built in 1895. This house gained some notoriety in 1916-1919 as the place used by lone train robber Bill Carlisle as a hiding place. At that time it was named the Dutchmen's Ranch. The old barn is still standing.

At various times school was held in a room of the ranch home, and in 1912 a school named Starr was built about a mile from the ranch. A school called Williams was located on the Starr-Rutherford ranch from 1938-40, and was described by the teacher as "one half of a grain shed which had been nailed to the end of a log cabin. The shed part was made of slabs and there were many holes. There was no need to open the windows to let in fresh air."[20] The teacher reported the 8 by 8 foot room was not much better than her cabin in which the water she put on the stove at night had to be thawed in the morning.

The present Cozy Hollow school in Albany county is on the Kennedy brothers' ranch, but previously was situated at various sites in the locale. The school has now become a ward of the School District #1 with headquarters in Laramie. The patrons no longer are required to move the school, paint the buildings, etc., and district specialists in art, physical education and music are sent out to provide for the children's education.

This is in direct contrast to the original Cozy Hollow school, a homesteader's cabin, reportedly named by L.W. Weber, who exclaimed, "Isn't this a cozy little hollow?"[18]

The River Bridge school in Albany county took its name because of the proximity to a bridge spanning the north Laramie river. It is a comparatively new building built by district formula with windows on the south and a lone door facing east. There is a fence to keep out livestock.

The building itself may be new, but the name of the school and its history is varied, under sundry names in various locations beginning with a school called Hall for the Flake-Hall ranch. Actually this school was taught in the home from 1910 to 1912. In 1913 school was relocated about a quarter of a mile from the main buildings and was called the Newkirk school for the ranch children by that name who attended. As the Hall children still attended, the move was probably made to make it equal distance between the families.

In 1918-19 the school was moved again, this time to the Harry Dunlap ranch where it became the Dunlap school as that family had adopted two children "on trial."

The school was closed for lack of children in 1931, reopened in 1953, and reestablished in 1959 to 1964. As the Robbins children were the only ones attending school at that time, the school was moved to the Robbins ranch.

The Palmer school in Palmer canyon, like the other schools now in use, cannot be considered historic sites as buildings themselves were constructed in the early 1960's, replacing older structures.

Bosler school in the village of Bosler on old Highway 30, is actually the only "historic site school" in northern Albany county. The school opened in 1910 with a single teacher and a single student. Freda Luhen was the pupil and a Miss Brown the teacher. By 1936 it had grown to 40 students with three busses bringing in students from outlying areas. By 1975 the attendance had dropped to ten.

The Marshall school was moved from the northwest corner of Albany county to LeBonte Park in Laramie. It has been restored as a monument to the fading country schools and is the oldest school building in the county. Prior to its final move, it too had a number of locations and names.

The first Marshall school was held in 1914-15 in the Cold Spring area, but in 1923-24 the building was located on the Nickerson place and was also called the Nickerson school. That year Ruth Brulla was the teacher; later it was conducted by Helen Drake, Lucille Engle and Bertha Cordes. In 1925-26 the school was consolidated and included a high school with L.W. McMarch the teacher. In 1927-28 school was conducted in the Marshall post office.

Students were bus ed by automobile and sled/and in the ranches of the area a story is told of Hank Starr who, although he ate breakfast at home before the run, he stopped to eat breakfast with each family as he picked up the children.

When the Curry school consolidated, it took some of the Marshall children and was sometimes referred to as the Marshall school. In 1930-31 the Marshall school was attended by the Patterson offspring, and hence became the Patterson school. Up until 1945-46 it was called, among other names, the Waring-Atkinson or Waring Robbins school.

Before leaving northern Albany county, it would be remiss not to mention the North Albany Community Hall which was, and is still, used by patrons and schools for many of their projects, meetings, programs, picnics etc. Because of the low number of students per school, schools would combine to present events which required greater participation. Many times these events took plage at the North Albany Community Hall.

In southern Albany county stands Harmony school. It is one of the few sch - ools in the county which has operated in the same location. It has had several different names, however. Once it was the Sodergreen for a lake in the area; Bowie or Larsen for residents; Tarkio for a stock food, and later changed to Harmony-Popp school. Popp was the rancher who donated the land on which the building stands. Harmony was the church's name across the road from the school. Mr. Popp was very pro-German and when the United States entered World War II,

many of the local ranchers despised having the name of Popp on the building. One night a rancher, Nate Johnson, painted out the name from the building and the school has been referred to as Harmony ever since.

One school that could be a candidate for an historical site is the Montz Creek school. It has been moved from its location in Albany county to the State Fair Grounds in Douglas, Converse county as an exhibit.

In Carbon county two schools - McFadden and Sand Lake - are still in use. Both have potential for historical sites.

The first McFadden school was established in 1894 at the behest of Alvery Dixon. School was conducted only four months in the summer. A few years later a new building was constructed on the site of the present school. High school grades were incorporated in the system in 1924 when the population increased due to an oil boom which lasted four years, then tapered off. The early high school classes were taught in the basement of the amusement hall. In 1959 the high school was discontinued and students transported elsewhere.

Another school built in Carbon county to accomodate the oil industry was the Lamont school, still standing, truly a "ragged beggar." Oil was discovered in what was known as Old Lost Soldier Oil Field, and a town established named Bairoil with a population of 210 people. The first school was held in Frank Tanner's home. He was a field foreman in 1919.

James Lamont leased a section of land and put up a store, filling station, and some wretched rentals for the oil field workers. The town mushroomed in population and a school was erected in the back of Lamont's store. The patrons rummaged for books, desks and a blackboard for the school. A Swedish woman, wife of an oil field worker, was the first teacher for three years until 1928. The town owner, James Lamont, along with Robert Tully, a rancher, and Everett Dye, an oil field worker, comprised the first school board.

In 1930 a new building was erected. Ruth Beebe was the teacher and recalls, "It was a large classroom, a cloak room and also a bench with water from a five gallon can that I filled every morning at the filling station and brought to school."[21]

Beebe had a degree in education so a sign was posted proclaiming Lamont as a Wyoming Superior School.

This building burned down in 1933 - a snow storm caused a gas valve to malfunction, and the school term was finished in a private home until the present Lamont building was constructed. It was built in two different sections with two rooms and a gym and indoor rest rooms. Later a teacherage was finished above the classrooms.

In 1971 this school closed down as the children were transferred to Bairoil and the building became the Ferris Mountain Community church where services are held in the summer.

Mrs. Beebe returned to teach in 1958. She describes the present building, "it sits in grandeur silently watching on its pedestal thinking of all the child's feet that ran up and down its stairs receiving their elementary education."[21]

One room rural schools have all but disappeared from the scene in Laramie county. A mere shell of the original stucco building stands near its modern namesake - Willadsen school, nineteen miles west of Cheyenne off the Interstate. This old building is representative of a large number of one room schools which were operated by District #4 - names such as Otto, Hecla, Borie, Granite, Blanchard, Williams, Windy Hollow, Farthing, Ferguson, Merritt and Happy Jack.

Only the latter building remains - Happy Jack is today a model of rural schools which were so vividly a part of the Wyoming landscape. It sits now as a living monument in Cheyenne's Holiday Park. This school first opened its doors in 1902 near the present site of Pine Grove estates beyond Curt Gowdy Park.

In 1904 it was moved to a site nearer to Crystal Lake. There it was in operation until 1961 when it became part of a consolidated school.

The building was moved to Frontier Park in Cheyenne by the Laramie County Historical Society and the exterior was restored. In 1976, as a part of the Bicentennial activities, the Laramie County Retired Teachers Association had it relocated in Holiday Park and restored and furnished the interior. It is now open each summer for tourists to visit an authentic glimpse of the past.

One of the early teachers in the Happy Jack school recalls a day when she was serving as hostess at the restored school when a man brought his young child in to point out the very desk at which he sat as a young boy.[22]

Merritt school building in Laramie county still rings with voices of children but only as a shelter for those who live in Happy Valley estate homes to wait in for the large, yellow, school district bus to transport them to various schools in Cheyenne. The bus travels a restricted route.

Although many schools were and are formula structures, one that continues to operate in Laramie county is unique architecture. Ingleside school near Horse Creek was constructed as a WPA project by members of the community. The four room, yellow stucco structure, replaced a one room school which still stands as a ranch storage building in the small community. The project was completed in 1941 for a population of workers in the limestone quarry -Horse Creek Mine and employees of the Great Western Sugar company and surrounding ranchers.

Jean Clawson, currently the teacher at Ingleside school now operated as part of Laramie county School District #1, was a student in the old building and remembers the children picking up their books and carrying the desks several yards across to the newly built school.[23]

Country Schools as Historic Sites - 18

Sites of early day country schools in eastern Laramie county are unmarked for the most part, however there has just been completed an extensive survey of all types of historical sites in the county through a joint effort of the Wyoming Recreation Commission and the University of Wyoming. Students in the western history class under the direction of Laramie County Community College instructor, Jim Johns, have compiled information on at least six school sites. This information will be a part of the Wyoming Collection in the Laramie County Community College for further researchers.

FOOT NOTES

COUNTRY SCHOOLS AS HISTORIC SITES

1. "Rural Education in Wyoming" - Wyoming Educator
2. Wyoming Annals Letter from W A Carter
3. Cheyenne Leader, October 19, 1867
4. Let Your Light Shine
5. Oral history tape - Jack Corbett
6. Taped interview - Ted Cronberg
7. Transcript of tape - C. Stuart Brown
8. History of Schools of Carbon County 1869-1959
9. Correspondence with Jean B. Russell
10. "History of Public Education in Daggett County and Adjacent Areas" - Master's thesis - Baxtor
11. Letter from Henry F. Chady, Sweetwater County Historical Society
12. Release from Wyoming Department of Public Instruction, 1940
13. Pioneer Parade
14. History of Elk Mountain Schools
15. Correspondence with Mrs. Ruth Beebe
16. Oral history tape - Helen Nelson
17. History of Upper Ham s Fork Valley
18. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
19. Ibid
20. Ibid
21. Correspondence with Ruth Beebe
22. Taped interview - Marguerite Johnson
23. Taped interview - Jean Clawson

COUNTRY SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY CENTERS

by

Milt Riske

Because the rural school was often the first public building in an area, it was a natural setting for community meetings. In the same vein, as the teacher was one of the earliest and sometimes the only paid employee with public funds, she became the unofficial director of a number of district affairs and the building became the center of those activities.

School buildings preceded churches in many communities, and there are a number of reports of buildings used for prayer meetings and church services, usually non-denominational. Some of the services were conducted by itinerant preachers, a latter day circuit rider.

While there are no records of funeral services held in a rural school, Ingleside school in the Iron mountain area of Laramie county, boasted of a marriage ceremony when Gunmar Andersen, a hotel commisary clerk, married Lil the cook. A Baptist minister came from Cheyenne to perform the ceremony.[1]

Harmony Church in Albany county held many of their church affairs in the Harmony school because the church was difficult to heat.[2]

In Boulder, Wyoming, while no funeral was held, the school was used in which to perform autopsies. When a town citizen, Ben Walker, was murdered by Jack Walters, the body was laid out on the floor and a decision made on the cause of death. Students remembered that the floor had blood stains and set several desks over that part of the floor. The body was later exhumed for further study, and the school used again.[3]

Meetings held in the schools were for the Cattlemen's Association, Union, Grange, Home Demonstration, Red Cross, Women's Clubs, Water Board and other

events requiring space.

School board meetings were held at the school, however there is a record from the minutes of a meeting of Laramie county District 4 that on October 10, 1931, the meeting was recessed so the members could travel to the Kinnamon ranch owing to darkness for completion of their business.[4]

Social were held in the school house - box lunch socials, cake walks, raffles and popularity contests. Many times these affairs were instigated by the teacher to raise funds for extra books, playground equipment, a phonograph or even a piano. Helm school in Albany county had a pie social to purchase a full sized wall map.

Box suppers were probably the most popular money raising affairs in the country schools. The girl who packed the lunch usually put in enough food for four and decorated the box with tissue paper and ribbon. It was against the rule for the girl to tip off the boy which box was hers, but sometimes a hint to one she liked such as, "I only had yellow ribbon" was enough.

One teacher recalls the box she prepared for the social was held upside down by the auctioneer.

Dances often followed the socials. Mrs. Agnes Hemburg recalls as a student the desks at Lone Star school in Uinta county were moved off to the side to make room for the dance.[5]

Rural school buildings were usually too small to hold dances, and while the affair might have been organized by the teacher, they would be held in places where more people could be accomodated. Fannie Smith, one of three Smith girls teaching in eastern Laramie county, had such a tiny shack for classes that there was no room for dancing. The livery stable loft in Hillsdale was fixed. "They hauled an old organ up there."[6]

Music for dancing was provided by the organ and also a fiddle. Baled hay was placed around the floor. Lanterns from the rafter gave off the light. "What a fire hazard. Any way we had fun," the teacher concluded.[7]

In the northern section of Albany county, Cozy Hollow, Boyd, Dodge, Weber and Brooks schools would combine to use the North Albany Club Hall for community gatherings. One teacher remembered that "The Kennedy men brought out their own light plant so the hall could have light."[8]

Christmas programs were always the highlight of the year in rural schools. These were much appreciated by the patrons and the mistakes provided chuckles for weeks afterwards.

It was a break from the monotonous routine of school, and teachers and students alike recall beginning practice for the recitations, songs and short skits soon after Thanksgiving. An example of how important the program was is shown by this incident. Nina Keslar Finley, suffering from whooping cough and not able to attend the Christmas program, was bundled up in cheaks and blankets and taken by buggy to the window of the school where Santa Claus plucked a doll from the tree and presented it to her.[9]

When a school had too few pupils, several schools in the district would combine to put on a program at a central location. The Palmer Canyon Dance Hall, a log building in Albany county, was used. Mrs. Boberg Anderson remembered a place, the Garden Spot Pavilion, a dance hall used for Christmas programs in Carbon county. As a student she could not comprehend a man who sat and stared at the candle-lit tree. Later she discovered he was the fire watch.[10] Before electricity trees were decorated with candles which burned. Buckets of water were set close by to squelch the flame should the tree catch on fire.

While playing the part of Santa Claus, a student at Woods Landing in Albany

county had his outfit catch on fire. It was quickly padded out, but the older people were cautious of accidental fire. The program was terminated.[10]

In another instance, it was not fire but firewater problems at a Christmas program. One cowboy had agreed to play Santa Claus, but had stopped along the way at a ranch or saloon for some Christmas cheer. His antics at the program were the topic of conversation for weeks to come.

There were other bugaboos in Christmas presentations besides fires or inebriated cowboys. At one program a teacher had two angels come through an open window; one made it, the other got caught in the opening.

When one teacher forgot the names of her students in the program, she was fired.

A Christmas program held on an unusually cold and stormy night kept all but a few at home. Those few who made it kept bundled up in wraps and overshoes as the students went through their lines. After the program, the teacher served cold punch. She was not fired, but a new and warmer school was built.

In addition to those at Christmas, other programs were presented, but none on as large a scale as Christmas. The picnics on the last day of school were popular and always well attended.

Spelling bees, arithmetic contests and debates were held in the schools. Robert Wallston recalls a literary program at Burns school in Laramie county with all local talent. A story recounted in a Rock Springs paper tells of an untimely end to a spelling bee and program when a cowboy rode into the school house on his horse.[11] A debate in a rural school in Uinta county discussed the topic: "Is a load of seed potatoes or a load of women most needed in the community?"[12]

Teachers would often combine the talents of their students to put on a district play. District four east of Cheyenne practiced weeks for a play, but could find no theater available for the production.

"Christmas in Laramie Dell" was written and produced by teachers and the children from several schools in northern Albany county, and was presented at the Northern Albany County Hall.

The rural school as a community center for the passing traveler cannot be omitted. It is recalled by those in isolated areas the necessity to use the buildings as shelters. Sometimes messages of thanks were left on the blackboards. Another traveler, however, stole the stove and stove pipes.

Rosella Carson, a Laramie county superintendent, recalls a teacher opening her school and finding a transient asleep in the school.[13]

During the depression of the '30's it was decided at a school board meeting that it would be better to buy a new stove for $18.50 than remove the stove from the unused Borie school in Laramie county. This school was situated near the Union Pacific railroad tracks and was a haven for hobos. The school board felt if they removed the stove, the hobos would start bonfires for warmth causing danger of the building burning down.[14]

FOOT NOTES

COUNTRY SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY CENTERS

1. From These Roots
2. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
3. They Made Wyoming Their Own
4. School Board Minutes, District #4, Laramie County
5. Taped interview - Agnes Hemberg
6. Hillsdale Heritage
7. Ibid
8. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
9. Calico Hill
10. History of Schools of Carbon county
11. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
12. Education File : Rock Springs Miner, November 3, 1933
13. They Made Wyoming Their Own
14. Oral history tape - Rosella Carson
15. School Board Minutes, District #4, Laramie county

TEACHERS: THEIR ROLES, RULES AND REGULATIONS

Teachers followed the railroad, the rancher, the homesteaders to the wide open spaces of Wyoming. They came for a variety of reasons. Their searches were for land, for romance, for adventure or for better paying jobs.

Teaching was, as some expressed, the one respectable job for a woman; being able to live on a ranch was an incentive for a girl to come to Wyoming. A male dominated area was also an attraction for a single teacher.

Wes Johnson said in his memoirs, "The schoolmarm brought culture and refinement into a raw land. Many young cowboys with romance as their object and also a wife swallowed their chewing tobacco while popping the question. Because there were schoolmarms for boys to marry the West settled faster."[1]

An early settler in Laramie county, Tom Brannigan, had a theory that women in Wyoming were smarter because so many teachers educated in the East came with the homesteader.[2]

How many teachers were influenced by Owen Wister's novel, The Virginian, cannot be determined. Some claimed to have read the novel; some said it had affected their move to Wyoming. Wister's image of the cowboy as a knight of the range instead of a hired man on horseback was somewhat unrealistic; but the portrayal of Molly Wood as a school teacher from the East dropped into a vast, unknown West was probably of a more reliable nature. There are those who believe that the model for Wister's heroine was Mary A. Wright who arrived from the East in 1885, although there were several other teachers in the area of Medicine Bow when Wister was researching the story.

The tales of bashful, tongue-tied cowboys checking out the new school marm are innumerable. A much recounted anecdote is the one of the cowboy who wants to meet the comely new teacher. With reins in hand he raps on the door of the teacherage inquiring the direction to a certain ranch by the name of the brand.

The teacher reads the brand on the horse, and hints that the horse might know the way. Cowboys would knock on the door for a variety of reasons, but what they were really seeking was a glimpse of the school marm.

May McAlister had answered an advertisement for a teaching job near Kemmerer. She had read about the cowboys, but had met none until being entertained at a school board meeting. A group of big-hatted, suntanned men skidded their horses to a stop before the picnic tables. She recalled they needed but one invitation to stop and eat.[3]

She and her teacher friend, Nell Yates, were more impressed with a young man they met on the train from Denver. It was J.C. Penny who also came to Kemmerer for a different job, a different adventure - to buy the first store which was to become a great merchandise empire.[4]

Nell Yates, while impressed with J.C. Penney, found it more practical to marry a mandolin playing cowboy, Joe Ewer. He had presented her the band from his "ten gallon" hat which the petite Kansas lass used as a belt.[5]

When Alvina Gluessig came from Wisconsin to teach at a ranch school in Wyoming, a Texas cowboy, George Lucy, swept the schoolhouse floors on weekends and started the fire in the pot bellied stove each frosty morning. Eventually they married and took up homesteading. The first summer they lived outdoors and covered their four poster bed with a canvas canopy; they ate their food off a a barn door set on logs. To make ends meet they trapped coyotes for bounty.[6]

Edna Roberts came to Wyoming in 1899 at the age of 18 to teach her first school. She married James Dolan, rancher and cowboy. Her old school building was purchased by Dolan, not for sentimental reasons, but to put in use as a bunkhouse.[7]

Cra Jones, teaching at the little cowtown of Lenore, did not know how to dance when she came from the East. It made no difference to the cowboys who were accustomed to dancing with each other in this female-scarce domain. Later she learned to dance and also to ride a horse. Once when riding across a rising Wind River, her strongbitted horse was swe pt downstream by the swift current and was caught behind a log. In the true mold of the heroic cowboy, "Dutch" Seipt rode in after the school marm's horse and rescued her. Later they were married.

A secretary from Kentucky came to Fontenelle, Wyoming to visit. She was asked to stay on to teach despite the fact that she had no training nor teaching experience. But teachers were scarce in western Wyoming and Iona Redfern stayed.

Dances were one of the few recreations on cold winter nights in Piney country. For a young girl it was something to look forward to and more to savor for days afterwards.

At one such dance Iona Redfern met a husky, good looking cowboy who asked her to dance. She accepted, but it ended in a difference of opinion, she claiming he held her so tightly her feet wouldn't touch the floor. Unknown to the couple, this was to be the beginning of a romance.

On her way to school one morning after, Iona saw two cowboys sneak out of the log school building, mount their horses and ride away. when she entered the classroom, she noticed on the front chalkboard a sketch of a horse's head and a cowboy, and lettered below was "The first lesson to learn is to love your teacher." As she scanned the message she smiled when she noticed, "I have a dreadful case of cowboy heart trouble on you." The message was unsigned, but she found out it was her cowboy dancing partner, Vigo Miller. After they started dating they seemed to find things to fuss about; one was a cheap ring won on a punch board and given innocently to her by a boy at a dance. Vigo took it off

her finger and threw it in the fire. "The next morning I fished it out of the ashes, the 'ruby' being melted somewhat," the teacher laughingly commented. "The ruby was 'traded' for a cowboy wedding ring."[8]

On another occasion, a teacher and her cowboy were unable to get to the county seat at Cheyenne to get a marriage license. They enlisted the service of a railroad conductor who made the run from the small community to town where he purchased the license and brought it back on the next train.[9]

A teacher who had come to Iron Mountain, Wyoming to meet a cowboy possibly received more than she bargained for. Tom Horn was a cowboy who made the ranch dances to check out the school marms. He was remembered by teachers as an excellent horseman, first rate cowboy, and gentleman. Glendoline Kimmel, a new teacher from Missouri, became infatuated with Horn, who was also a hired gun. When he was brought to trial for murder, Miss Kimmel became a star witness. In an attempt to save Tom Horn, she accused the son of the rancher with whom she was boarding of the murder. She was to be tried for perjury, but left Wyoming for Missouri. After Horn was found guilty and hanged, the charges against her were dropped.

Not every teacher was interested in marrying a cowboy or even meeting one, but there were enough matches made that school boards instituted clauses in contracts which prohibited teachers marrying during the school year. A few documents prohibited marrying for three years. In an attempt to keep the teacher from sowing the seeds of matrimony, a clause was inserted in some of the contracts forbidding the teacher to take out of the district trips for pleasure.

Despite the contracts, a number of teachers did marry and some were allowed to stay on as a teacher after marriage. Some districts had more trouble with keeping teachers due to marriage than others. Piny had six out of seven marry during one school year. Edington in Albany county was referred to as a "mating ground" because of the great turnover due to marriage.[10]

Why did the eligible swains become attracted to the school teacher rather than the ranch girls? In many instances the local man did not appeal to the rancher's daughters as a romantic figure as he did to the new teachers. Some local girls had no desire to stay in the area, and were hoping for a knight to carry her further away.

However, Kathleen Moore states, "Frequently the teacher married a man from the neighboring ranch or one of the hired cowboys. As the children of these homesteaders grew up, the boys often married a neighbor girl. Some of these girls also became teachers and taught in one room schools within a fifty mile radius of home. Eventually they too married a cowboy or rancher's son."[10]

With or without teaching experience, often the rancher's wife became the teacher. Her teaching duties were carried out along with the house work. One recalls putting her small child to sleep in the woodbox while she taught school.

Dorothy Hecox described her daily routine when her husband was out carrying mail like this: "On mail days we would have school for two hours in the morning, then the children and I would bundle up, go out and feed the chickens, feed and water the work horses, clean the barns, and then we would run over to the sheep and throw off some hay for them. Now we were ready to return to the house for lunch and another two hours for home work."[11]

In 1944 at the Bromley school no teacher was available so the mother became the teacher. She replaced her apron and turban as Mother Bromley, and with a neat hair style and jewelry then became Mrs. Bromley, the school teacher."[11]

Wyoming was liberal in restrictions in contracts, other than the prohibition of marriage. However, a few had such insertions as "no smoking on school premises," "no bobbed hair or nail polish."

Dorris Sander recalls that one district did not permit the teacher's automobile on the school ground.[12]

Widows and women with small children to raise alone were a source of supply as teachers in the early 1900's in Wyoming. While some of them were already known in the community, others came to teach because it was one of the respectable positions a divorcee could handle. In most rural schools there were children attending school taught by their mothers.

The opportunity of owning land was uppermost in the minds of some teachers. A male teacher is recalled by Leah Marsh Bain as having a master's degree from the East, but was one of her teachers in a sod school in Albany county. After the school week, he would ride horseback to his land in another county where he homesteaded, "and had his pet rattlesnake."[13]

F.O. Ruch homesteaded near Hillsdale in northeastern Laramie county, and also taught school at the Ruch-Town school. He became a prominent citizen of the area and a well-known educator.

It was not only the men who came to Wyoming to settle on land, but also some women. Jane Ellenberger came out from Dayton, Pennsylvania to take advantage of free land. She had teaching experience in Iowa, but came West when she was offered an opportunity in Wyoming. After teaching while proving up on her land, she returned to Iowa and married a druggist.

In 1918 a nineteen year old Alabama girl, Margaret Wooly, came West to teach at the Dodge school at the 96 ranch bunkhouse. While there she learned to ride a horse and firm up on a homestead, which she sold and returned to Washington, D.C. to work for the government.[14]

Three sisters came from Iowa to the sparse prairie of eastern Laramie county in the early 1900's. Each homesteaded and built one room cabins near each other. The cowboys referred to the cabins as Calico Hill. Two of the Davis sisters, Millicent and Florence, moved back to Iowa. The other sister remained to teach school but died in 1911.[15]

A teacher coming from the rural areas of the East where the roads are laid out in squares, where there is a farm at least every half mile and a school house at least every three miles, must have gazed in dismay at the wide grasslands of Wyoming with nothing to be seem for miles, or at towering peaks which dwarfed a human and where schools were moved from one ranch to another or could be held in a log house or a sod shanty.

Katherine Brett Slatt told of her first teaching job in 1914 in an interview: 'My contract was to teach on the home ranch on Jay creek south of Rock Springs. Transportation facilities to this ranch school and surrounding country was practically nil. In order to get to the ranch I left Rock Springs in a buckboard drawn by two horses which took us to the upper Gottsche ranch where I was met by someone with an extra horse for me. I believe the distance we rode on horseback was about six miles.

The ranch house in which I stayed was located in a narrow canyon. It was built of stone and had four rooms. There were four children, three daughters and a son. I roomed with the older daughter. There was no regular mail delivery. We had to depend on someone coming from the upper ranch or town, which was not very often during the winter months. The only source of music was an old Edison phonograph equipped with a crank.

The school was a one room log house situated about fifty feet from the house. It had old fashioned long seats, a bench or two, a teacher's desk and a pot-bellied stove that burned wood. Most of the time you froze on one side and roasted on the other. The window or the door were never opened for ventiliation because I was told too much fuel would be used and wasted. Anyway, a school board member told me 'there is enough ventilation through the cracks between some of the logs for these kids.'

My wages was $60 a month for six months."[18]

Mrs. Slo tt could have been worse off. When Hannah Johnson arrived from Nebraska to teach in Daniel, Wyoming she found her school had four walls but no roof. It was spring and the ranchers were taking their cattle to the summer range, but they stopped their work to board the roof, however, the mail order roofing paper did not arrive before a heavy rain. The rain splashed down between the boards as the teacher taught from under her umbrella with the children continuing their work sitting under their desks.[18]

Catherine Babery Anderson recalls the numbing cold of the school on Elk Mountain in Carbon county despite a hot stove in the middle of the room. The sandwiches in their dinner buckets were frozen hard as a rock.[19]

No school could have been as uncomfortable as the one on the Williams ranch in Albany county. "A half grain shed which had been nailed on the end of a low log cabin." The room measured about 8 by 8 feet. The furnishings consisted of a small coal stove, a pupil's desk, a table and a backless chair. The teacher used an orange crate for a book case and a piece of pressed wood painted black for a chalk board. The teacherage was a log cabin in which the water in the bucket had to be thawed every morning. The school lasted less than a term as the family residing on the ranch moved.[19]

Even buildings constructed especially as schools were not oases of warmth in winter when temperatures dropped as low as 50° below zero. J. Stuart Brown's schooldays are recalled in Fairview school in Lincoln county in 1924: "A wood burning, pot bellied stove front and center supplied the heat, Near the stove the temperature might be as high as 90° while in the rear of the building in extreme weather it would be near freezing. In the winter our feet were usually cold. We performed certain physical exercises several times a day that helped warm our lower extremities."[20]

Unlike the vacation advertisement, "Getting there was not half the fun." There were two problems, one to get to the ranch from the teacher's home, and the other, getting to school from the ranch.

One teacher recalls being brought out by car, transferred to a team and wagon driven by ranch children. The team ran away before reaching the ranch, and the snow was so deep the thought of trudging through it was too much for her and she went back to town.

At the Atkinson school in Albany county, a teacher did arrive at the school to begin her duties, but when her boy friend called on her she went for a ride and never came back. She sent for her clothes when the snow melted later in the spring.[22]

The teachers arriving to teach at District 20, Albany county, were brought out by Medicine Bow. The driver would tell them he had a red-headed tyrant for a wife, frightening the new teachers half to death. He did have a wife, but she was no tyrant.[23]

On her arrival at Kemmerer, a new teacher made her way to a building with a faded sign HOTEL. In attempting to register, she found it to be a house of prostitution. She was quickly directed to another rooming house.

The horse was the principal means of transportation and the teacher was introduced to it on her arrival. A green horn was advised by her tutor that bridling was simply to let the horse take the bit. But the horse refus ed it several times, and in her frustration she dropped the bridle. When she picked it up, the horse accepted it. She had been trying to put it in backwards; the horse was smarter than she.

Gates too were often a problem for the teacher as they had to be opened and closed, usually several of them between the ranch and the school building. The cowboy could open the gate while on horseback, ride through and close the gate without dismounting, but it was different for the teacher. Many times, as she left her horse to complete the task, the skittish animal would take off for the

home ranch. Sometimes a ranch hand would come to her rescue as he did when she needed to cross swollen streams after the spring thaw.

The advent of bridges at streams and cattleguards at crossings for automobiles helped solve these problems of transportation for teachers.

Mrs. Ruth Beebe taught in the Sweetwater valley for twenty-nine years, including four years at the R.S. Tully ranch. She graduated from horse back to the Model T for her transportation over the years. She recalls the car was more trouble than the horse; putting on chains, backing the car up the hill so the gasoline would run into the carburetor and not away from it, draining the radiator every cold day so it would not freeze, then refilling it.[23] The modern automobile with its heaters, radios, four wheel drive, made it easier for the teacher to leave the school for a weekend of "civilization," but there was always danger and the teachers were warned if stalled or lost in a blizzard, not to leave their cars. One such incident ended in death to an Albany county school teacher in 1963. Viola Garrety, returning to her duties at the Stambaugh ranch, left her stalled car during a storm. She did not make it to the ranch house and her body was discovered next morning five miles from safety.

Another similar incident had a happier ending. Evelyn Sands, driving a jeep with a winch, was stuck in the heavy snow with nothing to extract herself. She ran the engine only enough to keep warm until morning when the men came in a snow cat to rescue her.[25]

If riding a horse or driving a car could present problems, so could walking in 1934. Peggy Kvenild, a teacher from Providence, Rhode Island, remembered an incident with a coyote. As she made her way to school, she was followed by three of the predators. Memories of the carcass of a calf being torn to shreds were in her mind as she walked the half mile to school. In the telling and retelling of the story in the district, the coyotes nipped at her heels. The teacher felt the actual version was hair-raising enough.[24]

Many teachers remembered that boarding out with the homesteaders or ranchers was not all that great. Unheated bedrooms, jelly sandwiches for lunch, and the long walks or rides to school did not contribute to high morale.

An early teacher in Laramie county recalled sleeping with the wife in one raw dugout in the side of a hill in a homestead near Egbert and Yoder.[25] Another recollection was of a log hut that had several rooms, but only one kerosene lamp which had to be carried from one room to another when light was needed. She also described the "bathroom" - a ditch bank some yards away from the house.

Another teacher recounts being given a bed by herself while the mother, father, and daughter used the other. She then suggested the daughter could sleep with her. The suggestion was readily accepted.

Teachers also helped with the house work and cooking in times of need. There are stories too of teachers helping with rounding up stray cattle, putting out prairie fires and assisting with haying. An experienced seamstress teacher was put to work sewing underclothing for the rancher's daughters.

Lucille Preston was part of a haying crew for a Laramie county rancher during World War II when help was scarce. Grace McMillan helped the rancher's wife round up the cattle to save them from a prairie fire.[26]

Janitorial duties in the country school had to be assumed by the teacher. Some sewed their own curtains from whatever materials they could find. Floors were swept with a sweeping compound, and the oil and sawdust mixture was an olfactory remembrance which many teachers carried with them long after their rural teaching careers.

If the school building was not in condition to teach when she arrived, the teacher pitched in to help. A teacher in Albany county told of her housekeeping necessities as the school was in a shambles from the summer picknickers and fishermen.

F.O. Ruch, teacher at Ruch-Town school 8 miles north of Hilledale in Laramie county, had this to say when preparing his school for the session: "When school began October 20, the fence surrounding the yard was practically all down and had only half enough posts and wire. The flag pole, a jointed one, was in four pieces. The coal house door was off the hinges . . ." [27]

Rosella Carson, superintendent of Laramie county rural schools, took a male teacher to his first teaching job and found the school building so dilapidated that when he surveyed the situation at the out-of-the-way ranch, he sighed, "I've lived on jackrabbit and beans for sixteen years, I guess I can do it again." [28] The superintendent and the teacher cleaned up and plastered the walls so school could commence. The district bought the material and the teachers, patrons and pupils did the work.

The teacher was also the heating engineer. A few sawed their own wood, but usually this work was done by the district. The teacher, however, had to start the morning fires. When a teacher found the logs too long to fit the stove, she burned one end of the log then pushed the unburnt portion into the belly of the stove.

If no spring or pump was nearby, the teacher and students carried a jar of water to school each day. It was used principally for drinking, but in some instances a dirty pair of hands was washed. Teachers recall hoarding water with which to wash chalkboards. If a spring was nearby, it was good as water could be collected in a barrel and dipped out into a bucket kept in the school building. But this could also present a problem as illustrated when a teacher in Albany county found this note when she went to get the school supply of water, "Do not use, a rabbit fell in last night." At another school spring, a small boy fell into the spring barrel but his friend pulled him out. [29]

Animal control was another problem with which country school teachers had to cope. Many of the students rode or drove horses to school and some assistance had to be given to saddle or harness horses, and on a few occasions, the dogs hitched to a sleigh. Pets were a distraction as some children brought their animals to school. At the Prager school in Albany county, it was not only that "Mary had a little lamb," but every student would bring one to school. The teacher claimed she could tell who was in the outhouse by the lamb waiting at the closed door.[30]

One student recalls making friends with the baby antelopes on the trips to and from school. Sam Bundy remembers making a pet of a fawn and it followed the children to school in Carbon county.[31]

At another school a black calf which the rancher had taken into the house for survival and had grown accustomed to such treatment, would wander off the range and into the school house and lie down during school hours.

A child bringing his dog to school was nothing out of the ordinary, but sometimes a nuisance to the teacher. At a school in Albany county the teacher was happy to have Lyn Williams' dog as he was a buffer against the dog who would drop off the train.[32]

A teacher at Fillmore in the same county had cat problems. One cat was of no essence, but one girl brought 25 and the teacher became tired of having them all underfoot. She offered a boy in the school a quarter for every cat he could get rid of. The boy captured a bunch of the felines, but forgot that the river was solidly frozen over. In the meantime, the cats' owner reported the incident to her father and he took a dim view of the goings-on and had some angry words with the teacher. She retaliated by claiming the daughter had left the school ground during school time. She pun ished the girl by detaining her after school, but to appease the father, also kept the boy. Then she made a deal

with the boy to capture all the cats, put them in a gunny sack, and place them in the trunk of her car. She took them and turned them loose in down town Laramie.

In most instances of discipline the parents sided with the teacher in the rural school. Often if the teacher disciplined the student at school, he would also be disciplined at home. One boy recalled after his father found out he had been swatted at school, he rode alongside the boys horse and every time the boy's bottom arose from the saddle, the father willowed it.[35]

In contrast a Mr. McMillan in Sweetwater county thrashed a large school boy for threatening him with a knife. When the father angrily approached the teacher and complained of the incident, the teacher took off his coat and offered to settle matter with the father. The invitation was declined. Both the boy and his father straightened out according to subsequent accounts.[36]

Weather was often a bigger problem than discipline. One teacher in western Wyoming claimed it snowed the first day of school and also the last day of school. Although blizzards and cold weather were most severe, the rural teachers recall that missing school because of weather was unheard of. On some occasions pupils were kept overnight in the building when it was not safe to go out or no one could reach them. They slept on the floor covered up with coats and horseblankets.

There are stories of survival following a line fence to the ranch in raging storms, and of teachers tying the children single file behind the horse and giving the horse his head to find the ranch.

An unusual happening was recalled by Julia Hoffman Butler, a teacher at the Robinson Hoffman school in Albany county, when an earthquake "shook them up once."[37]

Prairie fires were often a problem, and in some instances, were caused by sparks from the railroad locomotives. A teacher was known to dismiss school to help fight the fires along the tracks.

In 1914 a fire was ignighted by a railroad engine at the Horse Creek school in Laramie county and had dire consequences. Embers from the woodburning engine

struck the school. The teacher, Bertha Rhinehart, directed her seven pupils to safety. When some of the students wandered off, the teacher returned to the building to search for them and she was fatally burned.[38]

While fire was a more common man-made disaster, Peggy Sneddon in 1923 in Lincoln county, while teaching in a temporary tar paper shack, would take her students to a safe place while blasting took place at the mine nearby. School was later moved to a safer location and the following year a more substantial building was built.[39]

The role of the teacher was looked upon as someone special in the community. In addition to entrusting their children to her, she was called upon to explain matters of historical or mathematical interest to the parents. To settle some arguments the teacher's word was taken as correct. This was especially true if the teacher was a man, or an older, more experienced woman. The teacher was expected to be a leader in community affairs, to participate in church activities such as singing in the choir or playing the organ. She was expected to arrange programs to benefit the community or school. "When will we have the next social?" was not an uncommon question put to the teacher.

Edna Roberts, on a committee to raise funds for a new cemetery in Pine Bluffs, suggested a dance. Some wag suggested it could be called the "grave yard ball."[40] Fund raising was part of the teacher's job and it will be covered more fully in "The School as a Community Center."

Not every teacher was regarded as a pillar of the community. In the History of Hamsfork Valley one teacher is recalled as "Having a great deal of peroxided hair, was very lively, and it was whispered she smoked. She was typical, I recall, unkindly referred to as a 'tramp teacher' who came west looking for adventure and a husband."[41]

In District 4, Laramie county, a Mr. Gibson was taken to task for lack of discipline and poor housekeeping. Another complaint seemed to stem from keeping the students too long.[42] Still another teacher was taken to task for throwing a dictionary at a student.

Especially the younger country school teachers were the butt of pranks by the older children and younger men of the district. One teacher at a school in Albany county went for a ride with her boy friend and never came back. She had recently had her hair bobbed and the students, to tease her, had placed the floor mop upside down and adressed the mop by the teacher's name.[43]

Strutting in the ranch yard in her best clothes, one teacher was roped by a cowboy and dragged into a mudhole. Two boys invited a teacher for a pancake breakfast where they added rags to the batter and oil to the coffee.[44]

On occasion a spunky teacher would fight back. At one ranch the hired men would sneak into the teacher's room and tie her clothes into hard knots. Come morning she had to slip into borrowed clothes, overalls usually, to get to the school. The teacher retaliated by dumping an entire can of starch into the wash water for the hired men's "long johns."[45]

Recreation, according to one teacher, was wandering out on the prairie where half wild horses roamed. They were tame enough that an apple or some oats would attract them, and by flipping a rope around the horse's neck and jumping aboard they could get a ride home or to school. This may have been one teacher's idea of recreation, but the consensus of most teachers in southern Wyoming was that dancing was the principal amusement.

In the winter when roads were impassable, or before the advent of the automobile, the teacher would toss a change of clothes including a pair of shoes to dance in, into a sack, tie it to the saddle, and ride to the nearest dance. Leaving on Saturday afternoon, the dance would last until the wee hours, and they would ride home on Sunday. Many a lass from the East who could not get

along with less than a steamer trunk of accessories for an overnight visit, found that in the West she could manage with less.

Wanna Clay Olson tells of coming to Wyoming in 1919 from Missouri to teach in a log school. A dance was given in her honor at a "nearby ranch" about ten miles away. She describes the welcome at the dance: "As my party of friends arrived, all the cowboys greeted us with shooting their six-guns into the air just for my welcome. Scared and excited would hardly describe my feelings. Two brothers furnished the music, each taking his turn playing the accordian. Just before daylight, we went home."[46]

The teachers were never at a loss for partners or dates, although it did not always work out the way expected. Don Collins, a cowboy, recalled that he once ~~he~~ made a date for one of his fellow knights of the saddle with a young teacher. The teacher, however, was under the impression that the date was with Collins, and was highly perturbed when the other fellow showed up even if he did sport a Ford Model T.

A hired man on the Cronberg ranch near Medicine Bow was smitten by the school teacher brought in to teach the three Cronberg boys. After a visit to the ranch by her "regular boyfriend" the teacher gave the hired hand the cold shoulder.

Ted Cronberg, one of the students, recalls the hired man went to Medicine Bow on a ranch errand and returned with a box of candy, which, according to Cronberg, was probably won on a punch board. He told the boys, "Give it to the teacher, maybe she'll talk to me." The boys took the candy out of the box and replaced it with rocks. When the teacher inquired about the box she was informed it was a gift of the hired man. "If you're good, we'll have a piece of candy after school," she told the boys. Cronberg remembers that when she discovered the rocks, she didn't speak to the hired man for another two weeks.[47]

"All this fun and paid for it" as one teacher reported - the pay ranged from $20.00 per month to as high as $100.00. Board and room had to be paid out of this salary. Many times a teacher would dip into her pay to buy some essential for the classroom; cloth for curtains a common item, but a luxury to some patrons.

Ruth Boam, who started her teaching career by crossing a river in a boat, was only to find the two brothers, who owned the neighboring ranches, were feuding and would not allow their children to attend school in the same building. She arranged to teach 5½ months at one ranch and the same amount of time at the other. In one school the district owned the stove pipes, but expected the teacher to buy the stove. She didn't.[46]

Finances were a problem for many hard pressed districts (with no state aid) At the Little Medicine one year all that was left in the treasury was $62.13. One of the ranchers donated $37.67 to bring the total to $100 so the district would be able to pay the teacher $20 per month for five months. There are several incidents of interest that took place during the depression years of the '30's.

One of these is recounted by C. Stuart Brown, now a district judge in Lincoln county. Brown was one of three brothers who attended a school in District No. 19 in 1931. In April of that year the district ran out of money. To pay the teacher to finish out the year, the parents decided that each student would bring $1.00. "In my family there were three of us in elementary school. We each brought our dollar. Some of the parents, no doubt, could not afford to raise a dollar to pay the teacher. The mechanics of this financial transaction was that the student actually brought the dollar to the school in person and handed it to the teacher. The school did, in fact, remain open during the balance of the year 1931.[49] Brown feels that as the teacher received no more that fifteen dollars to complete the academic year, she made a considerable effort.

The minutes of a School District Four school board meeting in Laramie county during the depression stated that from then on Washington's picture would come

to the buildings unframed due to finances.[58]

At a meeting in an Albany county rural school district, a male patron expressed his concern that the salaries of teachers were too high. When asked by a female patron wo what degree, he answered, "We can get a sheepherder for $35.00"

"Then hire the sheepherder, " the woman agrily retorted.

"You tell the SCB, " another woman chined in.[59]

The teacher's salary was not lowered in this case.

At whatever price education, the teaching was commendable and the experience of the country school teacher and her role in the rural community seems unforgettable.

FOOTNOTES

TEACHERS: THEIR ROLES, RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
2. Pioneer Parade
3. They Made Wyoming Their Own
4. Ibid
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Pioneer Parade
8. They Made Wyoming Their Own
9. From These Roots
10. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
11. Ibid
12. Sublette School Days
13. Taped interview - Dorris Sander
14. Taped interview - Leah Marsh Bain
15. Pioneer Parade
16. From These Roots
17. Transcript of oral history - Ruth Beebe
18. Let Your Light Shine
19. History of Elk Mountain Schools
20. Cowbelles Ring School bells
21. Taped report - J. Stuart Brown
22. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
23. Ibid
24. Reminiscing Along the Sweetwater
25. Cowbells Ring Schoolbells
26. Hillsdale Heritage
27. Ibid
28. IBid
29. Ibid
30. Oral History tape - Rosella Carson
31. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
32. Ibid
33. Taped interview - Sam Bundy
34. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
35. Ibid
36. History of Education in Dagget County
37. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
38. Let Your Light Shine
39. A Tale of Two Towns - Tulsa and LaBarge
40. Pioneer Parade
41. History of Hamsfork Valley
42. Minutes of School Board Meeting, District #4, Laramie county
43. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
44. Ibid
45. Ibid
46. Ibid
47. Taped interview - Ted Cronberg
48. Taped interview - Ruth Boan
49. Transcript of tape - C. Stuart Brown
50. Minutes of School Board Meeting District #4, Laramie county
51. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells

READING--WRITING--'RITHMETIC--AND RECITATION

Laramie, Albany, Carbon, Sweetwater, Uinta, Lincoln counties Milt Riske
WYOMING

Despite a minimum of educational requirements for the majority of early rural school teachers in southern Wyoming, very few students felt that they were short changed in their education. None felt that when or if they transferred into "town" school there were any discrepancies in their learning. Some, indeed, thought they were better prepared because of the one to one learning situations in the schools with lesser numbers of pupils. A few were of the opinion that the only possible disadvantage was a lack of competition because of fewer pupils.

Many of the ideas and methods now used in urban education were used earlier through circumstances in the country school. With fewer students in each grade, individual tutoring was possible. The open classroom concept was necessary as in the majority of buildings all classes were taught in a single room. The teacher would summon one grade to a recitation bench or circle, while the other grades worked on their preparation at their desks.

Naturally, the second or third grader listened if the recitation from another group was interesting. In that way the first grader heard seven years of geography or history before he studied the course personally. The system also worked in reverse as one teacher recalled when a lower grade student was asked to recite the multipication tables. He started by "2's and the teacher asked him to start by 1's; an eighth grade boy blurted out, "Darn, I didn't know you could start there."[1]

In many instances older students were allowed to assist the teacher in tutoring the younger pupils in such duties as pronouncing spelling words or correcting elementary math problems and thus improved or reinforced their own learning.

Before a course of study was instituted by the State Department of Public Instruction, curriculum offerings were mandated by custom or patterns experienced

by the teachers previously. Most teachers felt that the course of study was a great help and most followed it. Helen Nelson, former rural school teacher and later county superintendent of Albany county, claimed that many ranchers wives were former school teachers, and to make sure their own children were getting a "proper" education, picked up a copy of the course of study or had the one they had used and checked it against the progress of their offspring.

One teacher claimed there was no course of study or teacher's manuals in the district in which she was hired because, as the board put it, "That's what they hired teachers for."[2]

As a contrast to today's multi media of learning materials in the classrooms, textbooks were the principal medium of learning in the early country school. The availability of enough of these books was often the problem. A teacher recalls that there were no books at all and the students brought whatever books could be found in their homes.

Those texts recalled by teachers and students in interviews were Lippincott spellers, Winston and Beacon readers, and even a McGuffey's Pictorial Ecletic Primer of 1836.

The style of a reading lesson in an early McGuffey Primer example is interesting:

Is it an ox?
It is an ox.
It is my ox.

It is I.
It is me.
It is he.

Is it a cow?
It is my cow.
She has no hay.
Let her be fed.

An earlier book, the New England Primer, was aclytic:

He that nier learn
his ABC
Forever will a blockhead be

Woosters Second Reader gave this example:

See Dick run
Run, Dick run
See Jane jump
Jump, Jane, jump

A.S. Barnes also published a prominent reading text and a history series. Some of the math books came with pages of answers in the back of the book. To force the students to work out the problems, one teacher tore out the back pages; to retaliate the students destroyed the answers in the teacher's book. The tea cher and the students ended up working the problems.[3]

Interviewed teachers recalled the many subjects taught in country class rooms: reading, arithmetic, penmanship (usually Palmer method). Dr. Laurence Walker in his rural school days felt that geography was taught to a greater extent than history.[4] Another teacher found the course of study prescribed six weeks study of Arabia, but the geography book had only two short paragraphs.[5] Grammar was a part of the curriculum; literature was a part of the reading course. Art was sometimes called drawing. Spelling was emphasized and stars were awarded for perfect papers. Health and hygiene instruction were required by state law. Agriculture was sometimes a designated subject and many teachers with no farm or ranch background found they knew less than the students.

Very few teachers were capable of teaching all subjects with the ability of an expert. The emphasis given a course was up to the skill and desire of the teacher, but usually reading and phonics in the lower grades were deemed a strong necessity.

If the teacher was not artistic, art simply became sketching by the numbers or painting in a sketchbook with watercolors. Music was also a problem for some without natural ability or training and thus may have consisted of singing songs from the school song book. Among favorites recalled were: "Dixie," "Church in the Wildwood," "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean," "Keep the Home Fires Burning," "Tenting Tonight," and "Goodbye Mule." A few schools had pianos or a pump organ, but not all teachers could play.

For some years music in Albany county rural schools was taught by phonograph. At graduation from eighth grade, a combined choir from all country schools gave a concert of several numbers.[6]

Mrs. Beebe remembers a phonograph which played cylinder records.[7] Another district, when asked to purchase records for a phonograph the P.T.A. had furnished, refused, claiming that the treasury could not afford to buy such things for it would establish a policy that showed favoritism.[8]

Dr. Walker recalls his school as having a radio. "Every Friday morning at nine we had the Walter Damrosch Musical Appreciation Hour. Special workbooks were provided and I think it established my fondness for classical music."[9]

When the Horse Creek mine and the Great Western Sugar company were operating at full capacity, Ingleside school may have been one of the few, if not the only, rural school to boast of a band complete with majorettes. The parents paid a traveling music teacher, Mr. Cleo Wheeland, 25¢ per hour to instruct their offspring on instruments. One of the regular teachers organized a band of harmonicas for the first to third graders.

At the Hilladson school in Laramie county when all the students became enthusiastic to learn ballet, it was too expensive for them to go to Cheyenne for a ballet teacher. One of the better dancers took the course and, in turn, taught the other students.[10]

As part of class projects several schools reported having school newspapers. One was the Harmony school in Albany county. Their paper was named the Harmony Hilltop Herald. Each family received a free copy. Other copies were 5¢.[11]

Making enough copies of a newspaper or anything needed in duplicate or quantity was not as simple as with today's instant photo copy machinery. The problem in the rural school, as in most city schools, was solved by a hectograph process. By melting dry glue and adding glycerin into a cake pan a copy making substance was formed. The reproductions were blue and faded after a

period of time. Copies of tests could be made by this method which saved the teacher's having to write all the tests on the blackboard.

Glue in the rural school was usually a mixture of flour and water. Ink came as powder and was mixed with water. Liquid ink could be purchased, but it would freeze overnight in the country school house.

The slate and slate pencil, the earliest of writing materials in schools, was used sparingly, if at all, in Wyoming's rural schools. It was replaced by the nickel "Big Chief" red-covered tablet and the penny pencil. For penmanship the wooden pen holder with detachable points was provided. The prized possession of many children was their pencil box; later it was the multi-colored dinner bucket which became a "status symbol" replacing the lard or molasses pail.

All children carried their lunches usually, but in some instances a type of hot lunch was established, especially in the colder months when the pot bellied stove was in use. Hot soup or chocolate was a staple, but T.O. Rush as early as 1912 in a school in eastern Laramie county, many times baked potatoes which were plentiful in that area.[12]

Mrs. Julia Rainey Brown, teaching as Amesville in Lincoln county in 1917, noticed her student's sandwiches and apples were frozen by noontime. "So we arranged for each student to bring something that could be warmed up on the stove, so we had cocoa, vegetable soup and beans or a few other things they could carry.[13]

In some of the surviving rural schools today it is reported that T.V. dinners are served for lunch, cooked in the school's oven or the teacherage.

Whether dinner was in a Union Leader tobacco can or a fancily emblazoned dinner pail, the food ranged from plain lard sandwiches on home made bread to a hard boiled egg and angel food cake. It was said one could distinguish between rancher's children and the homesteaders by the dinner bucket fare. The

rancher's sons and daughters sandwiches were filled with thick slabs of beef and the homesteader's did not.[14]

On occasion, trading of a tid bit from the pail's larder took place. Also sharing a sample of mother's famous pastry or an apple with the teacher could bring forth a fate worse than death to the student --"teacher's pet" was not a popular role.

As early as 1885 the Territorial Legislature required that all tax supported schools teach the effects of alcohol in all hygiene classes. Health and hygiene, while not difficult to instruct, was sometimes a problem to practice with the not too hygenic water bucket and the community dipper; the lack of water to wash properly, and not to mention the odor of a fly-infested dead carcass near some of the buildings. Teachers did their best to teach a semblance of cleanliness. In an attempt to reinforce this virtue, one teacher questioned her students about egg which had dried around their mouths:

"I'll bet you had egg for breakfast?" she asked

"Nope," came the reply in unison.

"Eggs on Sunday?"

"Nope," they beamed, " on Saturday."

At the teacher's demand they washed their faces, but their father took a dim view of the proceedings. However, he later had to admit, "They learned some manners."[15]

C. Stuart Brown in his reminiscences of attending school at Fairview in Lincoln county, tells of the trials and tribulations of weekly baths of farm boys in the cold of winter:

Miss Helen James, in her zeal to teach hygiene and also to ease her olfactory senses from barnyard and body odors, took a giant step toward cleanliness. Bill and Tom Johnson, brothers 8 and 9, caused Miss James the concern and Mr. Brown,

a student, describes it in this manner:

"To say they needed a bath would not accurately describe the true situation . . . " The teacher sent notes home with the boys suggesting to the mother that they bathe. Mrs. Johnson's angry response by note said the only trouble was "that you old maid school teachers don't know what a man smells like." Her patience tried, Miss James gave the boys one last chance to get a bath over the weekend. They didn't and on Tuesday she brought soap and towels. With water heated she started her project and progressed until it came time to remove the boys' underwear. This is described by Brown:

"The boys' union suits were ankle length, full sleeve and trap door seat. They were part wool, but on the Johnson brothers a darker color." Not only was the underwear dark with dirt, the buttons had been removed and where they had been were "sewed up for the winter." Undaunted, the teacher cut the threads and bathed each boy.[16]

Field trips were a process of rural school education. The surrounding area was a built-in laboratory for wild life, ecology, agriculture and animal husbandry. Teachers and students tell of going to certain areas near the school to study nature. Evelyn Sands Kennedy, while teaching at the Sturgeon school in Albany county, recalls an incident from one field trip: "In one barn we found a mother bobcat. Mrs. Weinburger took a kitten to raise."[17]

Other recollections were trips to visit a cheese factory and ice cutting on the river.

Ranch schools with only one or two families were made to order for field trips. Marguerite Johnson claims the parents of one ranch made sure their children would go to the entertainment presented in the schools in Cheyenne and would also spend several days in Denver at the Stock Show.[18]

At different times the teachers would take the children to their own homes for visits over the weekends to break the monotony of ranch life and fulfill experiences that ranch existence could not provide. Mrs. Kennedy tells of taking Marylen and Susie to Casper where they had their first experience in a beauty parlor. On another occasion, she took the two boys and they went to the barbershop for the first time. They were surprised that it did not hurt to get their hair cut she reported.

On the return to the ranch she was stopped by a highway patrolman for speeding and warned of the danger to her precious cargo, "It's alright, we won't tell" the wide-eyed children proclaimed. The teacher turned it into a learning experience, "why one should not drive fast and obey rules."[19]

Some of the field trips were impromptu gatherings, such as a train wreck in which one car upset scattering cases of oranges and lemons. Many of these were gathered for student consumption.[20]

Another student remembers seeing the Irwin ranch cowboys driving their herds of rodeo and show stock past the school.[20]

The advance of the machine age was the cause of several spur-of-the moment field trips near Hillsdale, when soon after World War I a plane landed in a field. Without waiting to be dismissed, the students started running for the plane with the teacher not far behind. Although the students had seen a few planes flying overhead, this was the first close up view of the two winged, open cockpit flying machine.[21]

On another occasion, caravans of hard rubber wheeled trucks torturously growled their way along the highway near the school. A new model car was an object of curiosity, and yet, as an anachronsim of that same era, a student recalls a cavalry troop that had stopped at their ranch to use the stock tank to water their mounts.

Before leaving the curriculum to go on to extra-curricular, it would be unfair not to mention an instruction course which was used in areas where, for one reason or another, there was no established school. This was a correspondence curriculum called the Calvert, and it was advertised that "Any mother of mentality can teach the course." The materials were sent from Baltimore and the papers returned to the same place for correction. A personal letter to both pupil and parent-teacher concerning the progress was sent with the grade. The district usually picked up the $25.00 fee, but as suitable as the course was, parents preferred to have a school.

Playground equipment at early rural schools was at a minimum. But as children everywhere, boys and girls seemed to make do with such things as "flying with wings off the coal shed," "Sliding down old planks propped against a shed." Sledding down the side of a hill on a winter snow using the coal shovel as a sled or using a stick from a tree as a stick horse were fun. One teacher recounted that her smaller children would keep the stick horse - each having a name and a personality.

Games in which little or no equipment was needed were common. Among those mentioned were: Pump-Pump- Pullaway, Hide and Go Seek, Kick the Can or Kick the Stick, Run, Sheep, Run, London Bridge, Fox and Geese and Shinny. One game mentioned used a ball to throw over the school house roof and was given a wide variety of similar names, among them: Handy-d-over, Anti-over, Andy hi over etc.

Several times rattlesnake killing was mentioned as a recreational pursuit, but not as frequently as "drowning out and catching gophers." This was not an activity that today's physical education would sanction, but in the past there were different sets of rules and sidelights to the "sport." A water pail and access to water was needed. When the rodent was seen racing into one of the

many gopher holes on the prarie, the alarm was sounded. All holes in the immediate area would be plugged with dirt and rocks and buckets of water poured into the gophers' sanctuaries. After a number of pails went down, the gopher emerged to keep from drowning, and would race for his life. There were several variants of the rules. Some students of Williams school in Albany county recall roasting captured chipmunks.[23] Another in Lincoln county tells of holding a wire noose over the hole and catching the emerging gopher, then branding the critter with a small iron or wire.[24]

Baseball was a highly organized sport compared to gopher chasing, and could be played only when equipment was available. Early baseballs used at the Burnt-fork school in Sweetwater county were described: "They were made by a halfbreed named Robinson. They consisted of buckskin wrapped around a core of cork."[25]

In one school a boy interrupted the athletic program when, angry at his fellow players, he threw a softball bat and two gloves down the hole in the out-house. The rest of the schedule with other schools was cancelled.[26]

Any trip to another rural school was looked upon as a holiday whether it was for a track meet, ball game, scholastic contest or field trip. Few schools had gymnasiums, but at Pine Mountain school in Albany county, the teacher and students would head down to the ranch barn to play basketball in the loft. It was not unusual for one to fall into the manger below.

Activities while going to or coming from school must be considered educational and they were varied in Wyoming. One student in the western part of the state recalls playing with antelope on her way to school. Another recalls killing rattlesnakes and collecting the rattlers which he saved in a glass jar. While the Texas Trail was still used to bring herds of cattle through the state, one girl remembered lying on the ground while the herd passed by.

Almost every student recalled the numbing cold and biting blizzard snows. Students used every means of transportation to get to and from school. "Shanks Mare" commonly called walking was usual, but horseback was also a means of conveyance.

A student at a school along the Union Pacific railroad tracks would race her horse along side the train just to her teacher's worry.[28] One plucky young rider found the gates no problem; placing her dinner bucket on the post, she opened the gate, rode through, closed the gate, grabbed her dinner bucket and raced for school.

Homesteaders did not have a horse for each child. One teacher recalls all five children on a donkey; another, three on a horse - all barefooted but one, sporting a pair of spurs laced to his bare feet.

In the high country of heavy snows, dog teams, sleighs, skis and snowshoes were all part of the transportation system.

Early busing may have been just that when a rancher in Harmony district made a sled consisting of two logs eight feet long and approximately ten inches in diameter, and fixed them so they resembled runners and attached a log chain to which he hitched the horses. He referred to it as a Section 11 because he lived in section eleven of the district.[28]

An enclosed spring wagon with double doors in the rear and double benches inside was a closer resemblance to a school bus. This was used at Tie Siding in Albany county.[28]

Early busing incidents after automobiles came into use to transport students bear retelling:

One of these was when a trio of kittens followed a student to the bus stop. Two were chased back, but one jumped in the car. To expedite matters, the kitten was placed in a mailbox and the student was to phone her mother on arrival at school to pick up the kitten. The mailman beat the mother to the mailbox, however, and the frightened cat jumped into the mailman's car.[29] It no doubt gave the mailman another C.O. D. package (cat on delivery)

Another incident could have had a more tragic outcome. The driver of a 1934

Ford cut across the fields because the roads were snow clogged. He bent his exhaust pipe to such a degree that gas fumes escaped into the car and two boys sitting in the back were overcome by the fumes. On arrival at school only swift treatment by the teacher, Wilma McCullough, saved their lives.[30]

Students pranks and teacher's discipline were as much a part of the educational process as readin', writin', and 'rithmetic - at least they are as well remembered as the subject matter. The range of disciplinary measures went from lectures to expulsion, and included detention, raps on the knuckles, standing in the corner and use of the hickory stick. While nearly every teacher reports that discipline was necessary to be a proficient instructor, few felt it was ever a problem in the country school.

Pranks ranged from whispering to physically attacking a teacher. One report involved using a globe as a bowling ball; others leaving the school house to go to the out house and not returning as the playground swings were too fascinating; still another reports tying up the teacher in her own classroom.

One of the most original capers was running a fuse under the school building and lighting it. There was a mad exodus of pupils and teacher to surrounding roads. The fire raced to the end of the fuse, but there was no charge at the end. Because no one would tell who perpetrated the hoax, all were expelled until a note from home was brought in.[31]

Another piece of high jinx was throwing a hat in the air and shooting it full of holes. When the boy with the vented hat claimed "turnabout to be fair play," he was given an opportunity to shoot the perpetrator's hat. It failed because he was handed an unloaded gun.

Guns and horses were part of the social scene in the West, and the school was an extension of the society. Billy Steel had a disagreement with his teacher

Mounting his horse, he spurred him into a bucking show, employing his six-gun at the same time. He never came back to school; naturally enough, he became a rodeo bronc rider.[33]

Not all the mischievouness was as violent. Outhouses were filled with hay or, in one instance, coal. The guilty gleefully removed the contents when confronted. When chewing gum was banned in the school room, the culprit was made to chew five sticks at one time for the rest of the school day. Students were detained after school for five to ten minutes for every minute tardy. When told to bring a branch for spanking, one student pulled out an entire aspen and brought it in. When notes were intercepted the culprit was asked to read them aloud to the class.

Ted Cronberg, attending school at his father's ranch, remembers hiding a cat behind the flag on the wall. The teacher had him write the words, "I will not put a cat behind the flag" five hundred times. He claims to have stayed after school until nine o'clock writing.[34]

Each teacher developed his or her own individual brand of discipline to handle each student and situation, but one of the most novel was instituted by a Mr. Stark in a school near Boulder, Wyoming. In the parlance of the west, he "gave a man a fighting chance." He would cut an armload of willows, each about 8 feet long. If a discipline problem arose, he would call the offending student to the front of the room and ask him to choose a willow as a weapon. The student would usually choose the heaviest stick and would be given the first chance to strike Mr. Stark. But the teacher had his own personal willow, a slim, flexible one. The student would usually miss, leaving himself open to the teacher's stinging flicks. This was called "slap-jack" and no student ever recalled the teacher losing a duel.[35]

Although no two schools were ever identical in physical plant, curriculum, methods or activities, in 1919 an attempt was made to bring all schools in the state into a common mold.

"Early standardization codes were high enough to insure a ranch boy or girl hygenic conditions to work, sufficient books and supplies, and a fairly well qualified teacher in learning and experience. On the other hand they weren't so high or enlightened that a forward looking school district could not attain them."[36]

FOOT NOTES

READING, WRITING, 'RITHMETIC AND RECITATION

1. Oral history report - Helen Nelson
2. Sublette School Days
3. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
4. Taped interview - Laurence Walker
5. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
6. Oral history report - Wanna Clay Olson
7. Teaching Along the Sweetwater
8. Minutes of School Board Meeting, District #4, Laramie county
9. Taped interview - Laurence Walker
10. Taped interview - Marguerite Johnson
11. Cowboys Ring Schoolbells
12. Hillsdale Heritage
13. Taped interview - Julia Rainey Brown
14. Hillsdale Heritage
15. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
16. Narrative and tape - C. Stuart Brown
17. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
18. Taped interview - Marguerite Johnson
19. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
20. Ibid
21. Hillsdale Heritage
22. Ibid
23. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
24. Ibid
25. History of Daggett County and Adjacent Areas
26. History of Upper Hamsfork Valley
27. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
28. Ibid
29. Ibid
30. Ibid
31. Ibid
32. Ibid
33. History of Upper Hamsfork Valley
34. Taped interview - Ted Cronberg
35. History of Upper Hamsfork Valley
36. Wyoming Rural Schools

AMERICANIZATION OF ETHNIC GROUPS

It would be fitting to report that Wyoming, the Equality state, educated all children equally. This was not completely true in the early accounts of country schools.

Mexican children did not always attend school full time. A group of this nationality are reported to have attended the Stewart school on the Granger ranch in Albany county.[1]

In notes taken from a school board meeting in Laramie county, it is noted that a patron asked where a school was to be held and who the teacher would be. It was decided that if anyone other than "the Mexican" family attended, then school would be held in the regular school house; if not, it would be held in a small building near the Mexican family.[2] It was also decided if any children besides Mexican attended, a white American teacher would be engaged.

The education and Americanization of the immigrant was probably less pronounced in southern Wyoming as on the Great Plains to the east. The early foreign cattle ranchers were not alien to American ways. When the English and Scottish came to make their fortunes in the cattle business, their children remained behind or were sent East or abroad for their education.

The ethnic homesteaders first settled Kansas, the Dakotas and Nebraska, so in most instances, it was the second generation families which migrated to Wyoming in search of cheap land.

The Army brought forth the foreign immigrants to soldier on the frontier. A survey of soldiers of the forts in Wyoming showed 50% Irish and 20% German, many who were experienced in the Prussian Army.[3] The majority of these soldiers were unmarried, and only a mere scattering of children were in the territory from this source.

A law passed by the legislature of Wyoming territory in 1869 provided for general taxation for schools rather than voluntary contribution, and also provided that if there were fifteen negro children or more within a specified district, with the approval of the county superintendent, a separate school could be formed.[4] The first segregated school was in Laramie in 1875. As reported in the Cheyenne Daily Leader, "The colored population are to have a school in Laramie. They have rented a school building, hired a teacher and school will be commenced at once. This is certainly praiseworthy for our colored brethern."[5]

The earliest migrant workers in southern Wyoming were Russian-Americans brought in from Lincoln, Nebraska for the beet harvest, mostly to Goshen county. Entire families, usually large, were brought in by train. Boys and girls as young as nine worked alongside their parents in the fields. At this time there seemed to be no thought of migrant education, although these children were in the state as much as three months of the school year before returning to Nebraska.

A few did stay on, some attending schools, but in the district there was, as stated by August Brerle, a successful, but unschooled, farmer. In discussing American schools, he remarked, "Russia went to hell without schools, but we're going to hell with schools."[6]

Still there are tales of ethnic children attending southern Wyoming schools.[5] No story is quite as romantic as the young Mexican sheepherder who, after the sheep were placed in corrals for the winter, would attend school with washam ranch children near Rock Springs in Sweetwater county. On weekends, he went into town and sang at the South Pass Bar. According to Katherine Marie Brett Slott, the teacher at the ranch, a representative of the Victor Phonograph company on his way to Denver, entered the bar. After hearing the boy sing, the agent

arranged for a tryout for him. We never saw the boy again. Later I heard he sang with the Metropolitan Opera company in New York. He sent me a recording he had made in New York which was a wax cylinder type record."[7]

Of all the ethnic groups, the German-American family was the most closely knit. The native tongue of Germany was usually spoken exclusively at home. There were many German language newspapers published in the United States, lessening the need to learn to read English for news. The Bible was in German as were the church services.

The fact that there were no German parochial schools in Wyoming as there are still in other more highly populated states, may have caused the German families in Wyoming to adopt American language and education sooner.

In the early years the children of ethnic families spoke no English in the home which was a particular hardship for the first child who began school. It became easier for the younger brothers and sisters as the eldest returned home from school each day proudly spouting some newly acquired English. It was not until the second generation grew up that the German-American became comfortable with the English language. There are numerous incidents in which the fractured English of the German child made him the butt of laughter. This author recalls his grandfather telling him to bring in some "cups." "I did. I put them on the table and received a scolding for being such a 'dumkoff' or dumbhead. What he meant was some cobs - corn cobs for kindling in the stove."[8]

Many children attended school no further than the fourth or fifth grades. There was no pressure to keep the children in school. When one son told his father he was getting nothing out of school, his father told him, "Alright, go ahead with the manure hauling."[9]

During World War I German-American children in Wyoming country schools were not harrased as much as in other localities, although there were isolated cases of name-calling with taunts such as "Kaiser Lover," "Krauthead" etc.

Salem, near Pine Bluffs in Laramie county, was a Swedish community. Most of the children spoke both English and Swedish, however the parents showed more concern about the Americanization of their offspring than the Germans.

Rosella Carson remembers her brother started school unable to speak English. Her mother laid down the law to her husband that English must now be spoken in the home so that the rest of the children would start school without handicap.[10]

This was not the case in the Finnish settlement near Hanna in Carbon county where the Finns took no such pains to learn the American tongue. A school at the foot of Freezeout called Flat school where the non-English speaking Finnish children attended, had many problems with non-Finnish speaking teachers.[11]

In their every day dealings the Finns did pick up a few words, and Sam Bundy recollects one who could swear in American, but limited himself to his native tongue in other conversations.[12]

Schooling was more difficult for children of Italian immigrants because many parents remained in the United States only long enough to make some money, then returned to the homeland. But those who stayed felt the urge to become more Americanized and did not promote the speaking of their own language. There were but a few Italian-Americans found in the rural schools of Wyoming, most of this nationality settling in the urban areas.[13]

There are isolated reports of incidents involving ethnic children in Wyoming's schools. One teacher reported that the son of a section hand could speak only Syrian which she did not understand. However, in her report, she noted, "he was a very interesting person."[14]

Teachers reported that in spite of having no knowledge of the foreign language spoken by the children, they felt the student gained at least a partial, practical use of the language through the exposure at school.

Sharing of varied cultures was a rich benefit of ethnic students' participation in country schools. Teachers and other students became acquainted with the customs of the students from foreign backgrounds. The Mexican youngsters who learned the square dance and the Virginia reel, in turn taught the Mexican hat dance to their schoolmates. One teacher in Laramie county visited a Japanese family. They were eating with chop sticks. She remembered the family as being highly amused at her clumsy attempt to manipulate the chopsticks. She also recalled that each summer this Japanese family would take the children to Colorado to attend a Japanese school. The children were always glad to return to the Wyoming school. Here they got to write with pencils instead of brushes.[15]

At the Harriman school in Laramie county Gynith Nauta had as students two children of a Navajo reservation family. The family spoke only their native tongue. The teacher taught the children during the school day and brought the parents in at night to Americanize the vanishing American. Not only did she tutor them in the English language, but also showed them the dietary ways of the white man. She explained recipes including a dish called tuna fish salad. Marguerite Johnson, the county superintendent, recounts that on one of her visits to the school, when asked by one of the Navajo children what kind of sandwich she had in her lunch, she replied, "Tuna fish salad. Would you like one?" The child replied in the negative. Later as she was conferring with the teacher, Mrs. Johnson discovered that the Indian mother had found this fish in the can a very simple meal, and had fed the children so much of it that they had brought a whole sack of canned tuna to the teacher with the demand, "You keep it. We don't want it."[16]

Generally speaking the ethnic parents saw the advantage of education and the necessity of Americanization of their offspring and were staunch advocates of the schools. Orientals were particularly proud of their children's achievements in all schools.

Isaac Ferguson who had migrated from England was uneducated. He claimed to have learned to cipher and write on a slate while herding sheep. "Recognizing his own shortcomings in education, he later helped to build a log school on the Hamsfork for his children to attend."[17]

Although the country schools of southern Wyoming did not have significant numbers of students with ethnic backgrounds as the urban areas did, these institutions did play an integral part in the Americanization process of those who did attend country schools.

FOOT NOTES

AMERICANIZATION OF ETHNIC GROUPS

1. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
2. School Board Minutes, School District #4, Laramie County
3. Peopling the High Plains
4. Territorial Laws of Wyoming, 1869
5. Cheyenne Daily Leader, March 12, 1875.
6. Peopling the High Plains
7. Transcript of tape "My Teaching Career" Katherine Marie Slott
8. Tape - Milt Riske
9. Peopling the High Plains
10. Taped interview - Rosella Carson
11. Taped interview - Sam Bundy
12. Ibid
13. Peopling the High Plains
14. Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells
15. Ibid
16. Taped interview- Marguerite Johnson
17. History of Hamsfork Valley

THE COUNTRY SCHOOLS TODAY

The country school house, once envisioned as part of a setting on the lonesome prairie or nestled in a mountain valley, is slowly becoming part of vanishing Americana particularly in Wyoming where energy-thirsty enterprise is exploding populations and impacting formerly peaceful communities.

Reports from the State Department of Education number twenty-five school districts with at least one rural school. There are 82 rural elementary schools with 139 teachers serving 1,296 pupils. Many of these buildings do not fit the project's description of the country school; some schools have but one or two pupils per teacher.[1]

Few actual buildings remain in use in southern Wyoming. The upper reaches of northern Albany county have a small network of five or six rural schools under the supervision of the district office in Laramie. In the southern area of that county there are but two schools controlled and supplied by that office.

Valley View, approximately twenty miles west, is an exemplary model of a modern rural school, but does not fit the early definition of a country school for this project. The facility has all the advantages of its urban sisters including a gym and utility room, electricity, plumbing and heating.

The outstanding advantage in this school is the dedication of Mrs. Edith Clymer as a teacher. In an interview with Sherry Larson Lavato who taught with Mrs. Clymer at Valley View for two years, she felt it was her most memorable experience in education to be associated with this veteran who provided enrichment in unique ways. Mrs. Lavato remembers fishing in a stream with the children and frying the fish for lunch; starting fires on the ice and skating during noon hours; classroom projects in practical mathematics; individual piano lessons; ballet practice; taught along with the required subjects more easily with a low student-teacher ratio.[2]

Laramie county is presently divided into two districts; one under the administration in Cheyenne, and the second under the control of the superintendent in Pine Bluffs. District one operates but three rural schools in the western part of the county. In the eastern district, grade school children attend in the small communities of Hillsdale and Carpenter in structures which served as high schools before consolidation. High schools are maintained in Burns, Albin and Pine Bluffs with fluctuating enrollments.

Music, physical education and art specialists in Albany and Laramie county district #1 make periodic visits to the rural schools to provide the benefits of instruction city children receive. Standardized testing is also provided through district offices.

Those counties still maintaining rural schools are replacing or adding to the traditional white frame building with mobile buildings; some metal and others of simulated wood panel. Some of the mobile units serve as teacherages. Toilet facilities in trailers have replaced the outhouses which stood behind the little old school house.

Motorized buses carry the students great distances each morning and evening to and from their homes in outlying areas. After school events cannot be managed if they interfer with the bus schedule.

With consolidation of a number of smaller schools, patrons feel some of the communities have fallen apart and lost the identity which was fostered by basketball teams, 4-H clubs and other competitions; others argue that the advantages of better instruction and extra curricular offerings in the larger school substantially outweigh the loss of identity.

Alice Tuttle Starr believes, "With the pressure today of individualized instruction, it seems the country schools are 40 years ahead of modern instruction."[3]

Centennial school parent, Roberta Crune, had this to say about consolidation: "Some (changes) are definitely an improvement and others are argued pro and con. A music teacher comes from Laramie two days a week to teach music, a physical education teacher comes one day a week to teach P.E., and an art teacher every other week. I really don't know if this system is much better than music daily by some one who didn't know music, but tried never-the-less. The bookmobile is definitely on the plus side and it is great encouragement to pupils who might not read as much as they should."[4]

Another added benefit cited for the children of a country school today is that they are "next to nature." With current concerns for ecology and the study of the environment, who would have better laboratory materials than the teachers in these country schools?

The majority of students and teachers feel that country school education is more than satisfactory; a minority feel it not that good. In retrospect, some indicated that the education "of the good old days" was actually not that good, but only a sweet memory of youth.

As an example of what the country school must do today we examine the last bastian of rural education in northern Albany county, Wyoming.

Distances are so vast and winter storms so unpredictable that consolidation and busing seem out of the question. In six schools, teachers tutor from two to six children from nearby ranch families one through six grades. Books and equipment are the same as supplied to the elementary schools in Laramie. Lunches are sometimes prepared in the teacherage nearby. Sanitary facilities are provided. Parents transport the children via pickup trucks, four-wheeled drives, and even snowmobiles, but the horse is not an anachronism.

Dan Bender, who came from Ann Arbor, Michigan, believes there is a curious mixture of old and new" in his school in Albany county. The books, he explains, are as good and as expensive volumes as anywhere. Buses bring children safely to school. The car has replaced the pony; the log cabin has been replaced by the modern trailer. There are visits from the mobile library. The isolation is the same despite the convenience of the automobile; distances are mighty. "One does not run down to the drugstore for a soda or to a movie."[5]

It was this isolation that Mary Hvewinel who taught at Albany Peak speaks of. She was impressed with the warmth and conduct of the parents. She called it "neighboring," referring to pot luck suppers and programs. Negatives were the many dead flies she swept out before starting school, and the live ones that were a nuisance until the early frosts killed them. She also recalled trapping mice, thawing frozen pipes and windstorms that hit the area.[6]

Teachers today are far more prepared than the initial school marm with a normal training course in high school who religiously followed the recommended state course of study. Certification requirements are met and career teachers continue to up grade their educational credits and participate in in-service. The modern rural instructor must be a master of reading, writing and arithmetic; also have a knowledge of social studies, the sciences, the playground and children with special needs. Unless the school bus driver is also an engineer, there is no maintenance man to call should a heating system abort.

Some feel that the few rural schools which remain operate under trying conditions; the turnover of teachers in rural areas is too high. Although some may anticipate that the country schools are in the twilight of their long service, The Wyoming State Department of Education is dedicated to continued support. Roger Hammer, director of the service, believes there is more respect fostered

with families returning to ranches and farms, finding it a better life than in the city.[7]

Urban sprawl is another factor of contemporary society which adds a dimension to district planning. Four classrooms are required for grade school children fifteen miles from Cheyenne in Laramie county because of newly constructed dwellings on acreage developments west of the city. Teachers drive out from Cheyenne, and a school bus is provided.

Patrons of contemporary rural schools feel they have more controlling influence over their children's education than in a larger district.

The State Department of Education believes several techniques must be "considered for continuing and strengthening rural education. These include establishing an idea bank for teachers; identifying model schools for dissemination; increasing communication and co-operation between the State Department of Education and local schools; increasing community involvement in rural schools; developing strong pre-service and in-service programs; conducting research on the stress of rural teaching and how to stem the high rate of turnover; assessing the role of rural schools in community development."[8]

The quoted report and the following example contrast the advancement of rural schools in southern Wyoming. From the Laramie county superintendent in 1883: "Found School No. 2 in Dist. 5 held in a tent with board placed on nail keg for seat. The teacher is supplied with a good table, globe, dictionary and fractural supplies. Mr. J.W. McClure is a faithful teacher though working under difficulties. This school, called the Reed school, has nine pupils registered, six are present."[9]

FOOT NOTES

COUNTRY SCHOOLS TODAY

1. Rural Education in Wyoming - Wyoming Educator
2. Personal interview - Sherry Larson Lavato
3. Cowbells Ring Schoolbells
4. Ibid
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Personal interview - Roger Hammer
8. Rural Education in Wyoming - State Department of Education
9. Records of County Superintendent of Public Instruction, Laramie County, Wyoming Territory

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY

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2. Anderson, Gertrude and Nancy with Margaret Karstoft as teachers in Carbon County (3 generations)
3. Susan Ans as recent rural teacher in Laramie County (late 1960's)
4. Carol Arnold as teacher in eastern Laramie County (1940's)
5.* Leah Marsh Bain as student in Albany County; teacher in Goshen & Laramie counties (early 1900)
6. Ruth Boom, Lena & Sam Bundy as students in Carbon County (1890's)
7.* Judge C. Stuart Brown and mother as student and teacher in Uinta County (early 1900)
8. Rosella Carson as student, teacher and administrator Laramie County (early 1900-'
9. Jean Clawson as student and currently teacher in western Laramie county
10.* Ted Cronberg as student in Carbon County (1920's)
11. Harley Henderson as student and teacher in Laramie County (also Kansas) (1920's)
12. Mrs Tom Hunter as teacher out of Colorado Springs, Colo. early 1900's
13.* Marguerite Johnson as teacher, student and administrator Laramie County (1930- 60's)
14. Agnes Hamberg Olson as student in Uinta and Albany Counties (1920's)
15. Milt Riske as student Platte County, Nebraska (1920's)
16. Dorris Sander as student and teacher (Wisconsin) administrator Wyoming
17.* John Selk as student on Colorado/Wyoming border (1930's)
18.* Dr. Laurence Walker as student and teacher Campbell County

Oral History Tapes from Wyoming State Historical Department

* Effie Alleman as teacher in Lincoln County
Jack Corbett Administrator, Albany County
* Helen Nelson as teacher and administrator in Albany County
* Wanna Clay Olson as administrator in Albany County

* Indicates unusually good content

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